

The North Carolina Department of Correction Stylebook and Media Guide

*Tips for journalists covering
corrections issues in North Carolina*



The Public Affairs Office

The North Carolina Department of Correction's Public Affairs Office publishes this Stylebook and Media Guide as a resource for journalists covering the North Carolina Department of Correction. The guide provides basic style tips regarding issues particular to the field of corrections, specific tips for covering the North Carolina Department of Correction, answers to frequently asked questions and links to helpful outside resources.

The Media Guide is not intended to be a stand-alone document, but is intended to be used as a supplement to the Web site and other Department of Correction publications that provide more specific information about offenders, programs and policies and procedures. If you have additional questions after reviewing any of those resources, please contact the Public Affairs Office. The Public Affairs Office should be your first point of contact for any questions you have regarding the North Carolina Department of Correction.



**North Carolina
Department of Correction
Public Affairs Office
4201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4201
(919) 716-3700
www.doc.state.nc.us**

An Overview of the Department of Correction

Structure and Organization

The Department of Correction is comprised of four major divisions: the Division of Prisons, the Division of Community Corrections, Correction Enterprises and the Division of Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency Programs.

The **Division of Prisons** has responsibility for incarcerating approximately 40,000 inmates in prison facilities across the state. The division provides housing, food, medical services and rehabilitative programs for this large population and also administers the state's death penalty.

The **Division of Community Corrections** supervises offenders in the community, either probationers whose active sentences have been suspended, or parolees and post-release offenders who have served a prison sentence and are being reintegrated into the community. The division supervises approximately 118,000 probationers and more than 3,000 parolees and post-release offenders.

Correction Enterprises uses inmate labor to produce goods and services, including office furniture, road signs, paint and laundry. It provides meaningful training and work experiences to inmates while offering quality goods and services to state agencies and nonprofit organizations at a savings to taxpayers.

Finally, the **Division of Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency Programs** provides substance abuse treatment services to inmates, DWI offenders, probationers and parolees.

For more information about the major divisions, and the current numbers of inmates and offenders supervised, visit the NCDOC Web site at www.doc.state.nc.us.

Getting It Right

Important Things You Should Know Before You Get Started

Department of Correction v. Department of Corrections

The correct name of the department is the North Carolina Department of Correction. Correction does not have an “s” at the end. Correction is singular, not plural.

COMPARE: *The Division of Community Corrections does have an “s” on Corrections.*

Correctional Officer v. Guard

The employees who supervise inmates in North Carolina prisons are correctional officers, not guards. The use of the term “guard” dates back to when male officers were called guards and female officers were called matrons.

Adult Prisoners v. Juvenile Offenders

The North Carolina Department of Correction houses adult offenders over 16 years of age or juveniles ages 13-15 that have been tried and convicted as adults. For information about juvenile offenders, contact the Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at (919) 733-3388.



Prison v. Jail

The North Carolina Department of Correction operates prisons, not jails. State prisons generally house convicted felons; misdemeanants sentenced to

more than 90 days; and safekeepers--those defendants awaiting trial that need to be housed in prison for health or security reasons. Counties operate local jails, which generally house offenders awaiting trial; convicted misdemeanants sentenced to 90 days or less; and offenders specifically ordered to serve their sentences in the county jail.

NOTE: *The Department of Correction has no responsibility for local jails. If you have questions about local jails or detention centers, contact the Department of Health and Human Services, Jail and Detention Section, by calling DHHS's public information office at (919) 733-9190.*



Probation v. Parole

Parole is a conditional release from prison that allows an inmate who has served part of his sentence to finish his sentence in the community. Probation is a sentence that allows the offender to remain in the community under the supervision of a probation officer--in lieu of or in addition to a period of incarceration.

NOTE: *Offenders sentenced for crimes committed after Oct. 1, 1994 are not eligible for parole under the Structured Sentencing Act.*

Pronunciation Guide

Here are the correct spellings and phonetic pronunciations for some uncommon words:

Caledonia (Kal-uh-DOHN-yah) Correctional Institution
Pasquotank (PASS-kwa-tank) Correctional Institution
Tyrrell (Tuh-RELL) Prison Work Farm

Frequently Asked Questions

INFORMATION ABOUT OFFENDERS

How can I get more information about an offender in a North Carolina prison?

Go to the Web site, click on "Public Offender Search" then search for the offender using his name or DOC number. The Web site contains information on inmates, probationers and parolees from 1972 until the present.

How can I get a photo of an offender?

Once you have located the offender on the Web site, click on the photo to download .



NOTE: *The Web site only contains photographs for offenders currently serving time in North Carolina prisons or those who are currently absconding from probation or parole supervision. There are no photographs of safekeepers, current probationers or former inmates.*

What's the best way to get more details about than offender's crime(s)?

The public records in the jurisdiction in which the offender was convicted are the best source of detailed information about the inmate's crime(s). Also, you can check local media for any stories or reports published about the crime.

Does the Web site have information about crimes that the offender committed in other states?

No. The DOC Web site only has information about crimes the offender committed in North Carolina. Also, the Web site contains only those crimes for which the inmate received an active prison sentence or a period of supervised probation.

How can I find out about crimes the offender committed in other states?

Many states have Web sites similar to North Carolina's. You should contact that state's public information office and/or Web site for more information. For links to many state sites, visit www.corrections.com.

Does the Department provide contact information for an offender's victims?

No. The Department does not disclose any contact information related to the identities of the offender's victims and/or the victims' families.

Where can I find a list of the offenders on North Carolina's Sex Offender Registry?

The Office of the Attorney General oversees the Sex Offender Registry. To access the registry, visit the Attorney General's Web site at www.jus.state.nc.us or call (919) 716-6400.



How can I find inmates in federal prison?

Visit the Web site for the Federal Bureau of Prisons at www.bop.gov or call the BOP's Public Information Office at (202) 514-6551.

Where can I get statistics about North Carolina inmates, probationers or parolees?

The Office of Research and Planning creates several statistical publications for the Department of Correction. You can access these reports at <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/rap/> or by clicking the Statistics link on the NCODC home page. If these reports do not meet your needs, you can use the Sta-

tistical Report Generator to create simple reports or use the Automated System Query to create more advanced reports using criteria that you select. Both systems are extremely user-friendly if you follow the on-screen prompts. If you need help with these research tools, contact the Public Affairs Office.

ACCESS TO INMATES

Can I write to an inmate?

Yes. You should send your letter to the inmate at the facility in which he is housed via the U.S. Postal Service. On the envelope, include the inmates's DOC number in parentheses beside his/her name.

NOTE: *For security reasons, all incoming mail will be checked to see if it contains illegal or unauthorized items. Personal letters will not be read unless the officer-in-charge or his designee has reason to believe that the letter poses a threat to security.*

Can I call an inmate?

No. Inmates may not receive telephone calls. All inmates, however, may make collect telephone calls, with the exception of those housed at Central Prison. All telephone calls may be monitored.

How can I schedule an interview with an inmate?

Contact the Public Affairs Office. If the inmate is not on death row, you will be directed to write a letter to the inmate explaining why you want to interview him and requesting his permission to do the interview. If the inmate agrees to the interview, you will be directed to draft a letter to the head of the facility in which the inmate is housed requesting permission to conduct the interview. The letter should



detail the requested date of the interview, amount of time required, number of personnel (reporters, photographers, etc.) needed to conduct the interview and the type of equipment to be used. If the head of the facility agrees to the interview, the Public Affairs Office will contact you to coordinate the interview.

NOTE: *The head of the facility can refuse to grant access for interviews in the interests of security.*

What if the defendant is on death row?

Contact the Public Affairs Office. In addition to the requirements listed above, you also will be directed to contact the inmates's attorney and to provide written confirmation that the attorney gives permission for his client to grant the interview.

How do I find out the name of an offender's attorney?

Call the Public Affairs Office. If the offender has an attorney of record, the office will provide you with the attorney's contact information.



Can members of the media witness an execution?

Up to five media witnesses are selected to witness the execution and then brief other reporters on what they saw. The North Carolina Press Association (NCPA) and the Electronic News Association of the Carolinas (ENAC) may each select two witnesses and two alternates, while the Associated Press selects one witness and one alternate. Broadcast reporters who wish to be witnesses should contact ENAC representative Bob Costner at (336) 777-3900. Print reporters who wish to witness an execution should contact the North Carolina Press Association at (919) 787-7443.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Where to go for more information

How can I find out more about an inmate's day to day life in prison?



The Department of Correction publishes a Handbook for Family and Friends, which is available on the Web site. The handbook provides an excellent overview of an inmate's daily life. It describes custody classification, programs, visitation, health care services and other important aspects of prison life. The handbook also includes a directory of the state's prison facilities.

Does the Department of Correction provide any services for victims of crime?

The Office of Victim Services assists victims of crime, their families and interested parties after their offenders are sentenced. The section offers emotional support, educational materials, training, resource referrals and information about the criminal justice system. Contact the Office of Victim Services at (919) 716-3681.

How can I find out more information about the appellate process for death row inmates that appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court?

The United States Supreme Court publishes a Reporter's Guide to Applications Pending Before the United States Supreme Court. View this helpful resource at www.supremecourtus.gov.

How can I find out more about an offender's request for clemency?

In North Carolina, the Governor has the power to

grant clemency in the form of commutations and pardons. For more information about clemency, contact the Office of Executive Clemency at (919) 715-1695.

How can I find Web addresses for other criminal justice agencies in North Carolina?

Visit the North Carolina Justice Academy's site at <http://ncja.ncdoj.gov/Criminal-Justice-Links.aspx> for links to local police departments, sheriffs departments and other state and federal criminal justice agencies.

How can I get access to North Carolina laws?

Visit the North Carolina General Assembly's Web site at www.ncga.state.nc.us for the text of state statutes and bills.

How can I find out more about the North Carolina judicial system?

The Administrative Office of the Courts oversees the court system and publishes many helpful publications, including "Judicial System in North Carolina," a comprehensive look at the court system in North Carolina. Access the report and other helpful information on the AOC Web site at www.nccourts.org.



Where can I find more about sentencing structure?

The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission makes recommendations to the General Assembly on sentencing laws and policies. It also conducts studies and produces population projections. Visit its Web site at www.nccourts.org/Courts/CRS/Councils/spac for helpful information about sentencing and population issues.

Public Records

It is the policy of the North Carolina Department of Correction to respond promptly to requests for public information regarding the agency. Requests generally fall into two areas: employee records and inmate records.



Employee Records

Under North Carolina law, the following information is considered public information about employees:

- Name
- Age
- Date of original employment or appointment to State service
- Current position
- Title
- Current salary
- Date or amount of each increase or decrease in salary
- Date and type of each promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification
- Office or station to which the employee is currently assigned

All other information in an employee's file is considered confidential and may not be released without the written permission of the Secretary of Correction.

Inmate Records

Despite incarceration, an inmate does not entirely

forfeit his right to privacy. The following information regarding inmates is considered public information:

- Inmate name
- Age, race, sex
- Offense of which convicted
- Date and county of sentencing
- Length of sentence
- Date of arrival at or transfer from a prison
- Program placement and progress
- Custody classification
- Disciplinary offenses and dispositions
- Escapes and captures
- Dates regarding release
- Presence or absence of detainers

The contents of an inmate's files are not open to review by the general public or the media. Even with an inmate's written consent, medical records may not be released to the public.

Probationer and Parolee Records

The rules that apply for inmate records also apply for records pertaining to probationers and parolees. The conditions of an offender's probation or parole, the name of his supervising officer and the offender's assigned county are matters of public record. The contents of the offender supervision files are not considered public records and may not be released.

How to Request Public Records

If you want to request records from the Department of Correction, please contact the Public Affairs Office. Public documents will be made available for review at no charge. Upon request, the Public Affairs Office will copy documents at a minimal cost.

Information is
the currency of
democracy.

Thomas Jefferson

*The North Carolina Department of Correction
Stylebook and Media Guide* is available on the
Department of Correction's Web site at
www.doc.state.nc.us.